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ABSTRACT

This issue of the Educational Testing Service (ETS) "Policy Notes" highlights some of the viewpoints, research, and data presented at the 1996 ETS Invitational Conference on Latino Education Issues. The meeting brought together four presenters who are nationally recognized scholars with experience with issues related to the educational and socioeconomic conditions of Latinos. Their presentations are summarized in this issue. "Latinos and Education: An Overview of Sociodemographic Characteristics and School Conditions" by Richard R. Valencia characterizes the schooling of Latino students as marked by low achievement and segregation, with a number of inequities and unmet needs. "Preparing Teachers and Administrators To Serve the Needs of Latino Students" by Margarita Calderon describes a systematic approach to schooling for diversity and teacher education to prepare for this schooling. "Students' Pathways to Higher Education: Policy Lessons Learned from the Latino Eligibility Study" by Aida Hurtado and Eugene E. Garcia reviews the problem of the underrepresentation of Latinos in higher education. The final paper, "Aiming for College: Improving the Classroom Instruction of Elementary School Latino Students" by Richard P. Duran, Francisca Escobar, and Michele Wakin discusses achievement and assessment for instructional improvement for Latino students. (Contains six figures.) (SLD)

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ETS POLICY NOTES

News from the ETS Policy Information Center

VOLUME 8, Number 1 Winter 1997

Improving Latino Education

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ETS POLICY NOTES

News from the ETS Policy Information Center

Volume 8, Number 1

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Winter 1997

Latino Demographic and Educational Conditions

Richard R. Valencia

The changing racial/ethnic demography in the United States, and in several states in particular, challenges all institutions in our society to respond in ways that take advantage of this increasing diversity. While all sectors of society will be affected, education will be hit the hardest because of its intimate and early contact with people. This article describes the current demographic and educational conditions of the Latino population in the U.S.

Population and Enrollment Trends

Data from the Census Bureau indicate that there are 29.2 million Latinos in the United States, as of June 1, 1997.[1] Between 1980 and 1990, the Latino population in the U.S. increased by 53 percent, second only to the growth of Asian/Pacific Islanders (108 percent). Between 1990 and 1997, the Latino population increased 29 percent, again, second only to the Asian/Pacific Islander population increase of 34 percent. These growth rates between 1990 and 1997 are

This Issue: Improving Latino Education

Improving the educational and socioeconomic conditions of Latinos is critical for the long-term well-being and prosperity of the United States. Recent policy developments, however, threaten to slow progress on several fronts. This issue of *ETS Policy Notes* highlights some of the viewpoints, research, and data presented at the *1996 ETS Invitational Conference on Latino Education Issues*, a conference made possible by *Dialogo*, an ETS Latino staff group. The group brought together four main presenters who are nationally recognized scholars with first-hand experience with the issues they've written about.

In this issue of *ETS Policy Notes* we report the highlights of the presentations made by the four scholars. While we have summarized, paraphrased, and sometimes quoted directly, the views expressed here are those of the authors. ETS has also published the complete conference proceedings. Copies of *The 1996 ETS Invitational Conference on Latino Education Issues: Conference Proceedings* can be ordered for $15.00 from:

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- *Latinos and Education: An Overview of Sociodemographic Characteristics and School Conditions**, by Richard R. Valencia, the University of Texas at Austin
- *Preparing Teachers and Administrators to Serve the Needs of Latino Students*, by Margarita Calderon, Johns Hopkins University
- *Students' Pathways to Higher Education: Policy Lessons Learned from the Latino Eligibility Study*, by Aida Hurtado, University of California at Santa Cruz and Eugene E. Garcia, University of California at Berkeley
- *Improving Classroom Instruction for Latino Elementary School Students: Aiming for College*, by Richard P. Duran, Francisca Escobar, and Michele Wakin, University of California at Santa Barbara

*Some new data were added for the *ETS Policy Notes* article.

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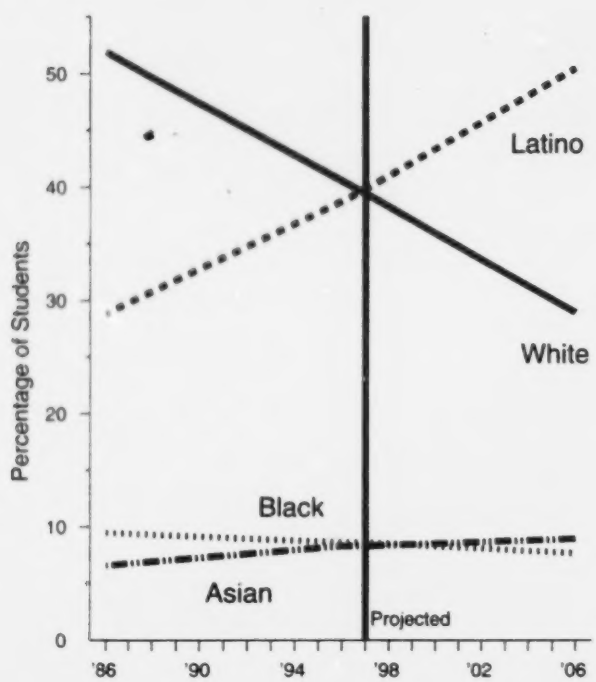
much larger than the rates of growth for Whites (3 percent) and Blacks (9.5 percent). It is very important to point out that the numerical growth for Latinos is also larger than for any other group. Between 1990 and 1997, the number of Latinos increased by about 6.6 million people, compared to an increase of about 6 million Whites, 2.8 million Blacks, and 2.4 million Asians. Projections indicate that the Latino population will continue to grow at a faster rate than the U.S. population and this trend will help shape profound population shifts of race/ethnicity in the near future.

This September, California's K-12 classrooms opened, for the first time, to a majority of Latino students. As shown in Figure 1, the line representing the proportion of Latino students in California's schools intersected the line for White students in 1997. From there, they continue in opposite directions. In two of our largest states — California and Texas — the general White population is projected to dip below the majority within the next decade or so.

Figure 1- Percentage of California's K-12 Enrollment for Asian, Black, Latino, and White Students, 1986 to 2006



Source: California Department of Finance, cited in Aida Hurtado and Eugene E. Garcia, *Students' Pathways to Higher Education: Policy Lessons Learned from the Latino Eligibility Study.*

Educational Attainment

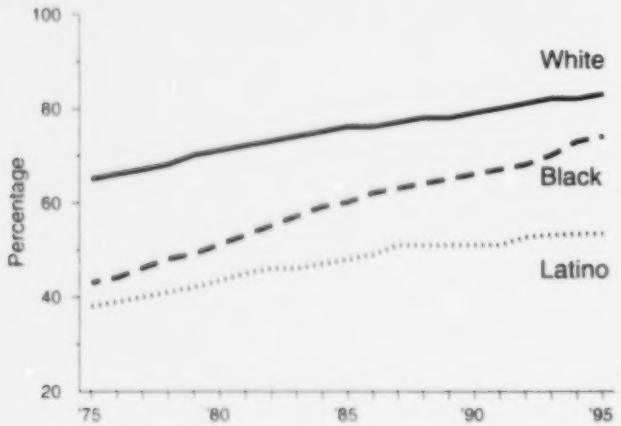
Although the educational attainment levels of Latinos are increasing, they remain considerably lower than those of the general population, the White population, and the Black population. Figures 2 and 3 show the trends. As shown in Figure 2, the current percentage of Latinos 25 years old or older who have completed high school is about 53 percent. This is considerably below the levels of Blacks (74 percent) and Whites (83 percent).

Figure 3 shows trends in the percentage of people in that age group completing four or more years of college. Only 9 percent of the Latino population attained this educational level in 1995, compared to 13 percent of Blacks and 24 percent of Whites. These low educational attainment levels, which are even worse for Mexican American and Puerto Rican subgroups, have serious implications for the school success of Latino children, given the statistical association between parental educational levels and the academic achievement of their children.

Child Poverty

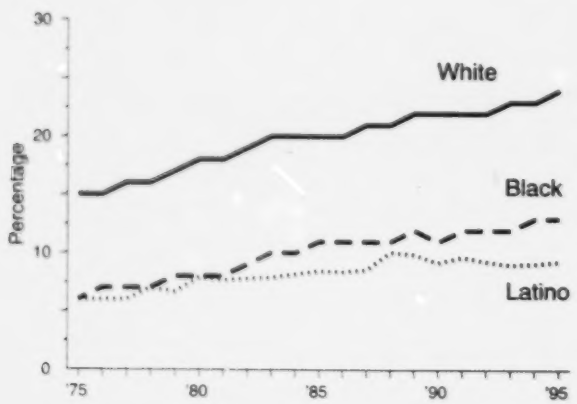
Poverty has immediate and long-term effects on children. In 1995, 39 percent of Latino children were in families with incomes below the poverty line. Among Latino subgroups,

Figure 2 - Percentage of Persons 25 to 29 Years Old Who Completed Four Years of High School or More, by Race/Ethnicity



Source: Deborah J. Carter and Reginald Wilson, *Minorities in Higher Education*, Washington, D.C.: American Council on Education, April 1997.

Figure 3 - Percentage of Persons 25 to 29 Years Old Who Completed Four Years of College or More, by Race/Ethnicity



Source: Deborah J. Carter and Reginald Wilson, *Minorities in Higher Education*, Washington, D.C.: American Council on Education, April 1997.

Mexican American and Puerto Rican children have the highest rates of poverty. The proportion of Black children in poverty was even higher — 42 percent. The figure for White children is 11 percent, and 20 percent of all children in the U.S. live below the poverty line. Figure 4 shows the trend lines. Little progress can be seen. And given the projected increases in the Latino population, along with national and state welfare reforms, the proportion of poor Latino children is likely to increase.

Schooling Conditions and Outcomes

The following 12 conditions and outcomes characterize the schooling of Latino students. Several are discussed in brief detail below:

- low academic achievement
- segregation
- large high school dropout rate
- inequities in school funding
- language/cultural exclusion
- curriculum differentiation (tracking or ability grouping)
- unmet needs in special education
- disparate, negative impact of high-stakes testing
- shortage of Latino teachers
- unfavorable teacher-student interactions
- undue school stress
- low college enrollment

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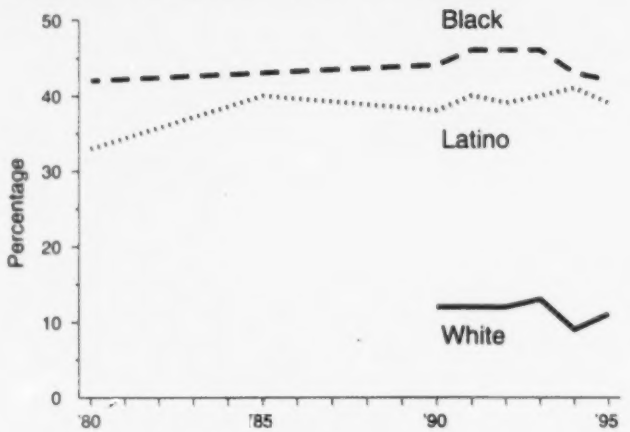
Low Academic Achievement. Data from the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) show that, on average, Latino children score below White children in science, mathematics, and reading. While the scores of Latino students have improved in some subjects over time, in general the gaps remain. Figure 5 shows the gaps in the academic performance of Latino and White children from 1975 to 1996 on NAEP assessments in reading, mathematics, and science. Improving the achievement of a substantial percentage of Latino students, particularly Mexican American and Puerto Rican children, presents one of the most formidable educational challenges of our time.

Curriculum Differentiation. "Curriculum differentiation" is defined as *"...the sorting of students into instructional groups based on perceived and/or measured educability."* Historically, tracking has been justified as a way to avoid frustration for slow learners and boredom for fast learners. Recent research, however, has not supported this view. As Jeannie Oakes, one of the leading authorities on tracking, has noted: *"increasingly, tracking is recognized as a school structure premised on an inaccurate and dysfunctional view that not every child is capable (of learning)."* Perhaps the single most critical charge

(continued on page 11)

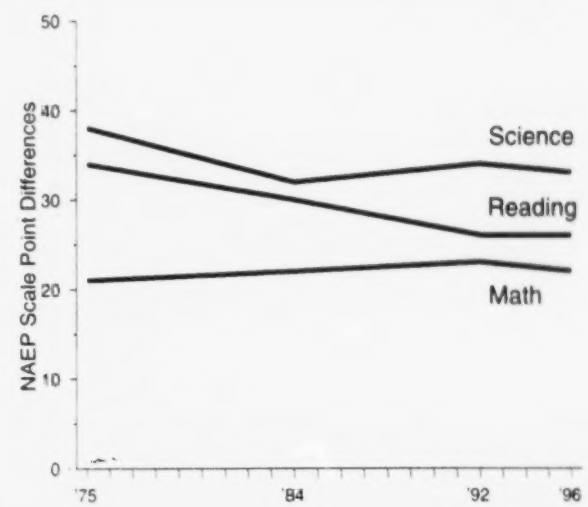
Figure 4 - Percentage of Related Children Living below the Poverty Level for Blacks, Whites, and Latinos*



Note: Data for Whites for 1980 and 1985 are not available. The poverty level for a family of four was $15,569 in 1995. Estimates for Black children include Latinos of that race. *Persons of Latino origin may be of any race.

Source: Federal Interagency Forum on Child and Family Statistics, *America's Children: Key National Indicators of Well-Being*, 1997.

Figure 5 - NAEP Scale Point Differences between White and Latino Students in Science, Reading, and Math



Source: Jay R. Campbell, Kristin E. Voelkl, and Patricia L. Donahue, *Report in Brief, NAEP 1996 Trends in Academic Progress*, prepared by Educational Testing Service for the National Center for Education Statistics, 1997.

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Preparing Teachers and Administrators to Serve the Needs of Latino Students

Margarita Calderon

The diversity in culture, religion, language, and academic background of students in most classrooms today challenges every educator's preparation. What worked in the past does not work now. Even in schools with predominantly Latino student populations, staff must recognize the diversity of the Latino culture to successfully address the needs of these students. A systematic approach to schooling for diversity appears to be the best promise for Latino student success. Such an approach is described below, organized around four questions.

1. What is a viable whole-school approach to ensure success?

2. How can we effectively provide ongoing professional development?

3. What is the role of local universities in professional development?

4. How do we accept the need to change our views about Latinos so that we can make the necessary schooling adjustments?

What Is a Viable Whole-School Approach to Ensure Success?

At elementary schools. The *Success for All* (SFA) program, also known as *Roots and Wings*, is an example of a comprehensive whole-school approach that has been documented as successful and is highly replicable. While the program differs across linguistic/cross-cultural settings, depending on the school's needs and resources, the following components are characteristic of a full program implementation:

- pre-kindergarten and kindergarten programs
- the Reading Roots and Reading Wings curricula (early reading programs)
- one-to-one tutoring
- heterogeneous grouping
- assessment every eight weeks
- a full-time facilitator
- a family support team
- a building advisory committee
- grade-level teacher teams
- staff development programs
- school commitments to reducing special education referrals, retaining students, etc.
- integrated science, social studies, writing, and math curricula

Another approach is *The Two-Way Bilingual Schools*, such as those operating in El Paso, Texas. Latino and other students in the school learn all their subject areas in two languages; develop biliteracy, as well as respect and appreciation of a second culture; and achieve higher levels of self-esteem than students in traditional bilingual and ESL (English-as-a-second-language) programs.

At middle schools. Work at the Evans Junior High School (Washington, D.C.) and at Central East Middle School (Philadelphia, Pa.) has identified the following essential components for student success:

- partnerships among family, schools, and community
- a demanding curriculum aimed at active learning
- assessment of both progress and excellence
- development of cultural knowledge and understanding
- detracked instruction
- flexible use of time and resources to ensure student success
- career exploration

At Wiggs Middle School in El Paso, researchers and practitioners have identified other specific components contributing to Latino students' success. These include the principal taking an active role, integrating research-based methods for

teaching and learning into the curriculum, emphasis on linguistic and cultural empowerment, teachers helping and working with other teachers, and reflecting Latino language and culture in all school activities.

At high schools. The first *Talent Development High School* was established in 1995 at Patterson High School (Baltimore, Md.), based on the belief that all students can learn challenging material if appropriate support is provided. The high school includes the following components:

- five college-preparatory, but career-focused academies
- a four-period day with 90-minute blocks
- homeroom advisory groups
- grades for improvement
- voluntary coaching
- a full-time social services staff
- sex and drug education programs

How Can We Effectively Provide Ongoing Professional Development?

Successful students have successful teachers. The same components that are used for effective instructional programs for students can be applied directly to teachers. These include:

- high expectations and an attractive and engaging program for the whole faculty
- teacher learning communities that provide a collegial environment where teachers can take risks and be innovative
- staff development tailored to classroom instruction and student background
- the school organized as a cultural community to promote stronger bonds between students and teachers
- opportunities for teachers to become proficient in specific languages and courses
- additional help, such as peer coaching, workshops, observing other teachers
- specific training in human relations and cross-cultural communication skills
- self-assessment

What Is the Role of Local Universities in Professional Development?

Universities can play a major role in helping to restructure classrooms and schools to address the needs of all students. Some of the recommendations for teacher education which should also be required for administrator certification, include the following:

- instruction in Spanish for half a semester and in English for half a semester in the subject areas in which a bilingual teacher will be certified to teach
- experiential learning of research-based methods for bilingual and ESL instruction
- field experiences in cross-cultural and bilingual classrooms
- instruction in ethnography and ethnographic techniques

Changing Our Views about Latino Students

The changing face of our nation's student population is described elsewhere in this issue of *ETS Policy Notes*. It stands in stark contrast with the predominantly white face of our nation's population of teachers, increasing the likelihood of cultural clashes in our schools. Research suggests that students and teachers tend to behave in distinct, culturally based ways in school settings. These different ways of interacting can lead to miscommunication and problems in school.

But culture goes both ways. Some white teachers may not recognize that their own backgrounds (and the cultures of their schools) affect student learning. And rather than appreciating that minority students have a culture that is valid and distinct from theirs, they may view these youngsters as "disadvantaged" or deficient in some way. Until we recognize the cultural richness and capital that exist in our schools, and find ways to let them blossom, we are unlikely to be truly developing the talents of Latino students.

Students' Pathways to Higher Education

Aida Hurtado and Eugene E. Garcia

Dimensions of the Problem

As shown in Figure1, Latino students are now a majority of California's elementary and secondary school students and their numbers are increasing. Yet only about 4 percent of the Latino students who graduate from California's schools are eligible to attend the University of California system and this percent has changed very little over time. The eligibility rate is 13 percent for Whites, 5 percent for Blacks, and 32 percent for Asians. Making matters even worse, about one-fifth of Latino youth don't graduate from high school. As these students move into a work-force that increasingly requires post-secondary education, the implications for the economic well-being of society are clear.

The image or metaphor of a "funnel" is used to describe the flow (or trickle) of Latino students through California's educational system.

- 73,575 Latinos graduated from high school in 1993
- 42,363, or 58 percent, did not pursue higher education
- 25,311, or 34 percent, attended a community college or California State University
- 5,901, or 8 percent, applied to the University of California
- 4,955, or 84 percent of those who applied, were accepted to the University of California, most through regular admissions
- 1,954, or 65 percent, of those accepted and enrolled, graduated within six years

Figure 6 shows the funnel in terms of the total population of Latino high school graduates in 1992-93.

A Call to Action

There is an urgent need for productive action to alleviate the problem of Latino underrepresentation in higher education. Policy lessons that are outlined below were culled from previously conducted studies and data.

Interventions should be:

- holistic, and involve parents
- continually evaluated and modified

Figure 6 - The Latino Funnel Effect in the University of California System

Source: Aida Hurtado and Eugene E. Garcia, *Students' Pathways to Higher Education: Policy Lessons Learned from the Latino Eligibility Study.*

- sensitive to racial/ethnic and gender differences
- designed to construct environments that benefit multiple constituencies
- characterized by intense interpersonal interactions to work the best for Latino students

As well, they should occur:

- at the systemic or institutional level, not only at the individual level
- as early as possible in the student's schooling, especially if they involve science

Future Research: A New Paradigm

Research in this area generally falls into two categories. The first is ethnographic research, focusing on home and school culture and norms. Participants are usually few, and qualitative methods are employed. Findings are nuanced and subjective.

The second type is the large-scale survey that delineates the status of groups of students as they move through the educational pipeline. National dropout rates and educational attainment rates by race/ethnicity are examples of this type. These kinds of surveys are important because they allow inter-group comparisons and allow us to monitor progress.

Unfortunately, few studies have used both types of research together to assess what helps or hinders students' educational achievement. The result of this gap in the research is that many studies assume a deficit framework that inadvertently blames the victims for their lack of "cultural capital" or "educational achievement," or for their "oppositional identity." These explanations will no longer be sufficient as students of color become the majority in many areas of the country.

Also, with the backlash against affirmative action and on race/ethnic-specific remedies for educational inequities, it becomes necessary to explain *all* students' educational failure and achievement.

In conclusion, it will take a strong alliance between researchers and policy makers to open up the Latino educational pipeline. On the road to finding the answers to Latinos' educational achievement, we will also learn a great deal about how to make education better for all students.

Aiming for College: Improving the Classroom Instruction of Elementary School Latino Students

Richard P. Duran, Francisca Escobar, and Michele Wakin

Data from the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) indicate that Latino students are noticeably behind White, non-Latino students as early as the fourth grade and this discrepancy builds through the remainder of elementary and secondary school (see Figure 5, for example). New efforts at systemic reform and the establishment of higher educational standards have implications for improving the educational experiences and outcomes of Latino students. These efforts also provide an opportunity for school practitioners to collaborate with university-based researchers and students.

In an example of such a collaborative approach, University of California, Santa Barbara, researchers are engaged in a multi-year partnership with two California elementary schools to improve teaching for Latino and non-Latino students.[1] The effort focuses on questions that serve as tools for guiding and framing activities and for evaluating progress.

- What is achievement?
- What activities can give rise to achievement?
- What counts as evidence of achievement in activities?

What Is Achievement?

At best, scores on tests and information obtained from performance assessments reflect what students know and can do based on a sampling of questions and problem-solving situations assumed to be relevant to instruction. But current cognitive science research suggests that we need to develop notions of achievement that broaden the range of skills, abilities, and knowledge that we view as products of schooling.[2]

New constructivist perspectives view students as active learners in the classroom, interacting with each other to obtain needed information. In this sense, achievement is broadened to include skills and strategies for thinking that require communication among students to develop articulated stances regarding what they know, what they are uncertain about, and what they should learn next.

Effective instruction helps students to think about the requirements and constraints of the situation at hand, and to produce actions and knowledge that meet the interpreted requirements of the situation. When faced with only remedial instruction, students act accordingly and develop an ongoing sense of self as remedial learner. Understanding how students might become more active agents and thinkers in a learning community requires notions of activity and achievement that acknowledge the pathways and resources that help build a student's self-identity and social identity as sense-makers in academic activities.

What Activities Give Rise to Achievement?

How do we give "life" to these ideas? One way is to create sense-making instructional units and classroom projects that teach students how to use the various forms of mediation that count as achievement, so that some of these forms of mediation become valuable tools in future instruction. These activities should be project-like and complex, and engage students in actively exploring the world around them. If they also stimulate deeper conceptual understanding of phenomena and issues that can be further explored in the classroom, they teach students to become active thinkers.

These ideas are illustrated by research on teaching science to Haitian middle school students who spoke Haitian Creole and were learning standard English. In analyzing the students' talk during science activities, researchers cited how the students began to act like scientists and how their role-playing as scientists was connected naturally to their linguistic and social knowledge. Learning activities of this sort involve the ongoing construction of a learning community that becomes the culture of the classroom. Embedded within learning communities are many opportunities to learn, constructed through the joint interaction of students with other students and with a teacher.

What Counts as Evidence of Achievement in Activities?

How do we know whether instructional activities give rise to desired achievements? Performance on traditional standardized tests and products generated as part of performance assessments may lack validity. These tests may not assess higher order thinking and processing skills relevant to subject matter and performance standards that require generating knowledge and using problem-solving skills.

Rather, the aim is for evidence of achievement to be also viewed in terms of *episodes of learning* that are authentic and occur in interlinked contexts, wherein complex activities lead to complex products and students participate in evaluating their own work. From this perspective, evidence of achievement is intimately tied to students' monitoring and self-regulation of their work, and through the regulation of work through interaction with other students and the teacher during a complex set of activities.

Over extended episodes of learning, it should be possible to identify a range of student products and processes that would constitute more discrete evidence of achievement. Such forms of evidence could be viewed as components of ongoing curriculum strategies; part of a classroom culture tied to students' development of self-identity as learners and learning agents, in the classroom as a community of practice.

The paper includes a synopsis of an extended biographical instructional sequence for fifth-grade students in a bilingual classroom that illustrates how evidence of achievement emerges as students work over the course of a sequence of several months.

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[1] The project is supported by the U.S. Department of Education's Center for Research on Education of Students Placed at Risk (CRESPAR) and the Center for Research on Education, Diversity, and Excellence (CREDE). The researchers include Richard P. Duran, Francisca Escobar, and Michele Wakin.

[2] See the work of Jerome Bruner.

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Latino Demographic and Educational Conditions

(continued from page 4)

against tracking is that its disparate, negative impact has been (and continues to be) directed mainly toward Latino and Black students from low socioeconomic backgrounds.

A current analysis of course enrollments in eight high schools in a Southwestern city indicates that Mexican American students are substantially underrepresented in college preparatory courses, particularly honors courses, and overrepresented in basic and consumer math.

The Impact of High-Stakes Testing. High-stakes testing is *the exclusive or near-exclusive use of a test score to make significant educational decisions about students, teachers (prospective and incumbent), and schools.* These tests can result in grade retention, students being denied participation in sports, and even in denial of a high school diploma. In some states, like Texas, low-achieving schools can be taken over by the state.

These kinds of tests can have negative effects on minority students. For example, the Texas Assessment of Academic Skills (TAAS) is used as a graduation requirement. In 1992-93, the failure rate for White eleventh graders was 31 percent, while the failure rate for Latinos was 61 percent, or about twice as high. This differential impact is also seen when the school is put to the test. Texas rates each school based on its TAAS results. Low-performing schools can be sanctioned and eventually closed. Schools with high enrollments of Latino and Black students are disproportionately represented among the low-performing schools.

Conclusions

As the Latino population swells in number, for the most part, social mobility, economic improvement, and school success are elusive and becoming more so. Latino students start and stay behind on measures of academic achievement, drop out of school in scandalously high numbers, attend segregated and inadequately financed schools, are less likely to take college-preparatory courses, are hit hard by high-stakes tests . . . and more.

Further, the current sociopolitical environment shows an intolerance for linguistic and cultural diversity, attacks affirmative action policy, and proposes immigration and welfare reform. These all work to the detriment of Latinos.

Finally, there is a resurgent interest in "deficit thinking" that does not bode well for Latinos and other low socioeconomic status minority groups. This idea holds that poor performance in school is rooted in the students' alleged cognitive and motivational deficits, rather than in institutional structures.

While it is difficult to be optimistic about the educational present and future of Latinos, there are reasons for hope. One reason is that there are groups — scholarly, community and policy-based — mobilizing to change what might otherwise become a dismal future. The mobilized concerns of these groups could make the educational future better for Latino students than the future projected by current demographic and sociopolitical trends.

[1] U.S. Bureau of the Census, Population Division, release PPL-57, United States Population Estimates, by Age, Sex, Race, and Hispanic Origin: 1990 to 1996, with associated updated tables for recent months (http://www.census.gov/population/estimates/nation/intfile3-1.txt). Hispanic and Latino are aggregations of several distinct national origin subgroups: Mexican, Puerto Rican, Cuban, Central and South American, and Other Hispanics. In 1990, Mexican Americans constituted more than 60 percent of this population, Puerto Ricans constituted 12 percent, and Other Hispanics made up about 23 percent. People of Cuban origin comprised the smallest segment, less than 5 percent.

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National Tests and Educational Reform: Are they Compatible? by Lyle Jones, William H. Angoff Memorial Lecture, October 1997.

Computer and Classrooms: The Status of Technology in U.S. Schools, Policy Information Report, May 1997.

Recently Published:

Students at Historically Black Colleges and Universities: Their Aspirations and Accomplishments, Policy Information Report, August 1997, $9.50.

This report finds that Black students attending HBCUs are more likely than their counterparts at other institutions to go to graduate school and to pursue engineering, business, and science.

Towards Inequality: Disturbing Trends in Higher Education, Policy Information Perspective, $9.50. This report traces the increasing inaccessibility of higher education for young people from lower-income families, and the high attrition rates for those who do enroll. The factors and forces that lead to inequality are discussed.

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